



SCHOLARSHIPS & TRAINING FOR EGYPTIAN PROFESSIONALS

Contract # AID-OAA-I-12-00009 (FORECAST IDIQ)

AID-263-TO-14-000001

Semi-Annual Progress Report

Submitted by:
Joseph Ghanem
STEP Chief of Party
Institute for International Education (IIE)
Date: October 30, 2014

Contents

I. Executive Summary	2
II. Progress.....	2
1. USAID STEM Undergraduate Scholarships - Cohort 1 (24 candidates)	2
2. USAID MBA Scholarships – Cohort 1 (60 candidates).....	7
3. Short-term Technical Assistance (STTA)	11
4. Assessment Study.....	14
Deliverables:.....	15
Administrative:	15
III. Challenges Encountered, Actions Taken and/or Resolutions.....	16
IV. Success stories.....	17
V. Documentation of best practices that can be taken to scale.....	18
ATTACHMENTS LIST:.....	20
ANNEXES LIST:	20

I. Executive Summary

This progress report covers the period from April 1, 2014 to September 30, 2014. Throughout the past six months, STEP staff continued to meet regularly with the USAID COR and Education team members in addition to project counterparts, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The STEP team also met with project partners AFS, Education for Employment (EFE), Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM), Injaz, and Career Development and Consultancy Academy (CDC), to update them on project progress and discuss potential roles and responsibilities for the academic scholarships and technical assistance requests. Additional meetings were held with partners throughout the six months to follow up / plan for program tasks and discuss lessons learned. A significant project achievement during this reporting period consists of the successful outreach and recruitment efforts for both the USAID STEM and MBA scholarships, which resulted in hundreds of qualified candidates applying to both opportunities as well as selection of participants in each. In addition, activities included short-term technical assistance (STTA) assignments requested by the USAID Education Technical Office.

II. Progress (activities completed, benchmarks achieved, performance standards completed) since the last report:

1. USAID STEM Undergraduate Scholarships - Cohort 1 (24 candidates)

During the previous reporting period, the COR advised STEP of the approval to redistribute the undergraduate STEM cohorts according to the following scenario:

- Cohort 1: starts Fall 2015 with 20+ students
- Cohort 2: starts Fall 2016 with 25+ students
- Cohort 3: starts Fall 2017 (number of students approximately 10-12)

Outreach and recruitment efforts for Cohort 1 began in May 2014 with the assumption that the STEM scholarship program participants would be recruited from both the general population and the E-CASE STEM school program. Eligible applicants are students who completed either of the following grades:

- High school grade (Thanawya Amma);
- Second Secondary grade (Junior) from either the public school or the STEM school system;
- 1st year in college (Freshman).

High school graduates (Thanawya Amma) and college students will be expected to undergo a nine-month Bridge Year at the American University in Cairo (AUC). The remaining applicants must submit a valid TOEFL or ACT score.

The STEP team finalized an outreach and recruitment plan for the STEM and MBA scholarships for women aimed at identifying qualified candidates throughout Egypt, through a transparent and fair selection process based on the following core criteria, approved by USAID for STEM applicants:

STEM Undergraduate – Selection criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial need as defined by a related rubric as well as evidenced by home visits.• Egyptian Citizenship – Dual citizens are not eligible.• Commitment to pursue academic studies and professional careers in STEM fields as demonstrated during the selection interview processes and evidenced by their response to a related question in the application.• Applicants must either be enrolled in or have obtained a Thanawya Amma diploma from a public GOE school, experimental or Azhari schools, or schools under charitable organizations.• Freshman college students must have graduated from a public high school, experimental, Azhari, or a school under charitable organizations; in addition, they must be enrolled in a public university.• Applicants who were enrolled in a private secondary school or university are not eligible.• Academic performance:<ul style="list-style-type: none">➢ Minimum acceptable general score in Thanawya Amma exam is 90%; in addition, minimum acceptable average grade in sciences and/or mathematics is 90%;➢ Second Secondary students in the public school system must graduate from Thanawya Amma in 2015 with equivalent scores;➢ Second Secondary students in the STEM school system must graduate in 2015 with a minimum score in sciences and mathematics of 85%.• Presents potential for further leadership development as demonstrated during the selection interview processes and evidenced by their response to a related question in the application.• Students in 2nd Secondary submit a valid TOEFL score of 500 or more or a minimum ACT score of 24.

All communication materials used throughout the outreach and recruitment process were approved in advance by USAID and are in conformity with the USAID branding guidelines that were revised in July 2014 under the Higher Education Initiative (HEI). *(Please see Attachment 1 for the revised branding on the scholarship application and rollups)*

- In late September, STEP was requested to stop using the HEI branding or STEP reference until further notice.

In preparation for the outreach process for both scholarships, STEP held a partner kick off meeting on June 4, 2014 to introduce the management of each partner and highlight roles and responsibilities for each organization, in conformity with a draft timeline of activities. This meeting proved extremely helpful in demonstrating how each partner's scope builds upon or contributes to the other as well as how each scope fits into the greater implementation plan and is aligned with the programs objectives.

A. STEM Outreach Process:

Ministry of Education

On June 2, 2014, STEP's COP and DCOP accompanied USAID Participant Training Specialist, Samah Eid, to the Ministry of Education to meet with Sector Head of Public Education, Mr. Mohamed Saad, Director of International Cooperation Unit, Mrs. Nermine El Nomany, General Manager for Cultural Affairs, Mrs. Hoda El Saad, and an Education Specialist, Mrs. Sanaa. STEP briefed the attendees on the undergraduate scholarships program in STEM fields and sought their guidance and feedback on the proposed newspaper ad and selection criteria. It further asked for MOE's assistance in announcing the scholarship opportunity on the MOE portal. In summary, the meeting resulted in the following main decisions:

- Set the minimum acceptable general score in Thanawya Amma at 90% as well as an average score in sciences and/or mathematics of 90%;
- Extend the application deadline from July 15 to July 20 to correspond with the issuance of the Thanawya Amma results;
- Authorization to visit public schools is contingent on the issuance of security clearance by the MOE's Security Department.
- MOE expressed its desire to participate in the selection process and asked to be updated of the recruitment process.

Throughout the process, STEP continued to update the MOE on the outreach, recruitment, and selection processes. In turn, the MOE nominated two representatives to attend candidate selection activities as representatives of the MOE, when their schedules permit.

Printed material:

After it obtained USAID's approval, STEP printed 2,000 STEM brochures and 5,000 flyers for distribution through AFS and its network organizations throughout the governorates as well as during information sessions. STEP also sent brochures and flyers to the Ministry of Education. Banners and roll-ups were also printed and used during information sessions and other activities.

Information Sessions

In partnership with AFS for Cultural Exchanges, STEP conducted 16 information sessions across 12 governorates (*please see Attachment 2 for a list of sessions held by location*). Due to the time constraints surrounding Cohort 1, there was a limit as to the number of information sessions that could be held during the time available. The information sessions were held through AFS's partner NGOs and volunteer network in each region and were led by an AFS and STEP team member. They each consisted of a presentation followed by a lengthy question and answer session to explain the STEM scholarship opportunity to potential candidates, encourage participation, and respond to any concerns applicants may have. (*Please see Annex 1 for sample session pictures*)

Advertisement

In addition to the information sessions, the STEM scholarships opportunity was advertised in the Al Ahram newspaper on three different occasions (Saturday, June 21; Friday, July 4; and Thursday, July 10) accompanied by the following social media initiatives:

- Announcements on partner website: AFS
- STEP Facebook page advertising the HEI academic scholarships as well as providing up-to-date information on information sessions, selection process, and responses to candidate questions / inquiries. Total page "likes" to date are 1800.
- Postings on the AFS Facebook page as well as their Alumni group and Facebook pages of partner chapters across the governorates.
- Announcement posted on the US Embassy Facebook page and Twitter account.
- Scholarship brochures were distributed to partners as well to the Ministry of Education.

B. STEM Recruitment & Selection Process:

The STEM recruitment and selection process consisted of the following phases:

- Phase 1: Development of the application and scoring rubric;
- Phase 2: Review and scoring of applications;
- Phase 3: Individual interviews and English testing;
- Phase 4: Home visits;
- Phase 5: AUC Placement test;
- Phase 6: Group activities camp;
- Phase 7: Identification of finalists

Phase 1 – Development of the application and scoring rubric:

In partnership with AFS, the STEP team finalized the STEM scholarship application based on previous experience administering scholarship programs and lessons learned from the LOTUS program, also managed by IIE. The application was made available online on June 21st after review and approval by USAID. The application was posted in an interactive PDF format where applicants fill the form, print and send a complete set of documents by mail to AFS, which received and catalogued applications on behalf of STEP. In addition and again in collaboration with AFS, STEP developed an evaluation rubric for the application, with a separate section focusing specifically on the financial aspects of the application to conform with the selection criterion targeting candidates from an underserved or disadvantaged background.

The deadline to submit STEM applications was initially set at July 20, 2014. However, in a meeting on July 10, with USAID's Mission Director, Deputy Mission Director, Acting CO, Acting Director of Education & Training, Director of Communications, COR, Acquisition & Assistance Specialist, new HEI branding guidelines were introduced and STEP was asked to provide an opportunity for the HEI branding to govern the STEM and MBA scholarships. As a result, STEP extended the STEM application deadline to July 31, 2014.

Phase 2 – Review and scoring of applications:

A total of 334 applications were received by AFS, 27 of which are from the E-CASE STEM School for girls. It is noteworthy that the number of applications received from the STEM School for girls was limited as a result of STEP's inability to conduct outreach activities in public schools due to MOE's prerequisite for security clearance (please refer to "Challenges Encountered" section later in this report).

The applications were reviewed and scored. 263 applicants representing 25 governorates met the core criteria noted previously and submitted the necessary supporting documents.

Phase 3: Individual interviews and English testing:

STEP invited 263 applicants to participate in individual interviews to be conducted by panels composed each of three assessors consisting of members from IIE and AFS. Interview questions and an evaluating rubric were developed by IIE and AFS, again using best practices from the IIE's LOTUS program as well as from AFS's past experiences.

Prior to the interview sessions, a workshop was held on August 6 at AFS's premises; it was attended by the assessors including two MOE representatives. The purpose of the workshop consisted in briefing the assessors on the interview evaluation rubric and on the objectives of the interview sessions so that all assessors were adequately prepared. (*Please refer to Annex 2 for workshop pictures*). Applicants'

interviews were held at Rajac Language School on August 7, 8, and 9. Each assessor scored the candidates individually and discussions were held among panelists after each interview in order to review scoring to make sure there are no significant discrepancies. *(Please refer to Annex 3 for the interview camp pictures.)*

In addition to the individual interview, each candidate was required to take a basic English language test to determine they possess at least basic English language skills. Applicants who received acceptable scores in the individual interview sessions as well as a score of 80/120 or higher were accepted to advance to the next step in the selection process; however, for applicants from underserved/disadvantaged governorates were accepted if they received a score of 74 and above in the English test. This basic test was an essential filter in order to identify early on in the process candidates who would not be able to succeed in the AUC English Placement Test (SEPT).

Following is a summary of the individual interview results:

- 238 applicants showed up for the individual interviews;
- 183 passed the Basic English test;
- 111 received both an acceptable score in the individual interview and a passing grade on the English test. They qualified to proceed to the next phase, the home visits.

Phase 4 - Home visits:

Following the individual interviews, AFS conducted home visits to 111 candidates in 22 governorates. The home visits focused primarily on the following two objectives:

- Ensuring that the parents of each candidate are informed of all details and requirements related to the scholarship and that they are supportive of their daughter to pursue this opportunity;
- Validation of the financial status of each family as reported on the application. This will ensure that candidates are from underserved/disadvantaged backgrounds and limited means.

As a result of the home visits, 76 candidates qualified to move to the next round, having demonstrated they are financially needy and their families were supportive of the scholarship objectives.

Phase 5 - AUC Placement test:

The identified 76 candidates consisted of the following groups:

- 54 are graduates from Thanawya Amma (including 9 who completed their Freshman year in college);
- 22 are students who completed their Second Secondary grade (including 14 in the ECASE STEM School for Girls)

As required by the selection criteria, the 22 students who had completed their Second Secondary grade submitted an acceptable score in TOEFL; they qualified to proceed to the final selection round. The remaining 54 students were invited to take the AUC English Placement Test (SEPT) on September 8, 2014, in advance of the final round of selection. The objective of the SEPT test is to identify candidates who are at an English level which allows them to benefit from the nine-month Bridge Year program and succeed in the U.S. universities testing requirements as well as in studies at U.S. universities. The AUC School of Continuing Education confirms that students who score a minimum of B1 (intermediate level) on the SEPT test would be able to reach the required English level required for their undergraduate studies. Out of the 52 candidates who showed up for the test, 28 qualified after the SEPT to join their 22 colleagues (Second Secondary grades) in participating in the final round of candidate selection, Phase 6.

At this stage, AFS contacted all the applicants and informed them of their status to-date including all those who failed to reach the latter selection phases.

Phase 6 – Group activities camp:

Fifty candidates representing 16 governorates reached the final round of STEM candidate selection after a meticulous recruitment process to reach the proper target group. AFS held a two-day intensive group activity camp at Pyramids Park hotel on September 19-20, 2014 (*please refer to Attachment 3 for the agenda of the Group Activities camp*). Candidates spent the entire weekend at the hotel, involved in numerous group activities and closely monitored and observed by a team of twenty four assessors. Activities focused on several competencies including leadership potential, creativity and innovation, adaptability, assertiveness and self-confidence, to ensure that candidates selected for the scholarship are well rounded individuals with potential to succeed in their studies abroad and integrate in their new environment. (*Please see Annex 4 for pictures during the Group Activities camp*). The candidates were graded by the evaluators for their behavior and performance during this camp.

Phase 7 - Identification of finalists:

Allowing for three alternates, the top 25 scores were identified by AFS and submitted to IIE. These candidates represented nine governorates. The largest representation was from Cairo with nine candidates.

The IIE STEP team and AFS team members met with the USAID COR on September 25th, 2014 to determine the best scenario for candidate selection given the final data and the governorates representation. During the meeting, all agreed to expand the representation of additional governorates by deselecting the lowest two scoring Cairo candidates and replacing them with the 27th and 29th scorers who come from two unrepresented governorates. Although three finalists are considered alternates in case others fail to receive acceptance in U.S. universities, it was agreed that, if all 25 finalists successfully complete their requirements for acceptance at U.S. universities, they will all be allowed to benefit from the scholarships. The STEM undergraduate finalists represent 11 governorates.

On September 30, AFS discovered through Facebook postings by a finalist that she had misrepresented her family's financial status in her application. STEP conveyed this information to the COR who suggested that further investigation be conducted. Between October 1 and October 2, STEP and AFS met with the finalist and her parents. The meeting eventually confirmed that the family purposely concealed important financial information which would eliminate the candidate from consideration. As a result, the final number of selected and USAID-approved candidates for the STEM scholarship program is 24 representing 11 governorates. (*Please see Attachment 4 for a list of the finalists by governorate*).

STEP will enroll nine of the finalists in the AUC nine-month Bridge Year program as of October 12; the remaining 15 finalists consist of 12 students at the ECASE STEM School for Girls and three in Thanawya Amma grade in public schools in each of the following governorates: Assiut, Aswan, and Matrouh. Official acceptance letters for candidates were approved by USAID; each finalist will receive an original letter signed by the Mission Director (*Please see Attachment 5 for copies of the acceptance letters*).

As of September 29, 2014, the STEP team had contacted all the finalists by phone to congratulate them for their selection, while AFS contacted all candidates who made it to the final stage and were not selected, informing them and encouraging them to re-apply to the next cohort.

2. USAID MBA Scholarships – Cohort 1 (60 candidates)

As reported in the previous report, it was agreed during the project kick-off meeting to reduce the number of cohorts for the MBA scholarships program from three to two as long as the total number of offered scholarships remains 100, and to postpone the enrollment of the first cohort at U.S. universities to Fall 2015.

In further consultation with the COR, it was agreed to recruit approximately 60 scholars in the first cohort and the balance in the second.

Outreach and recruitment efforts for MBA Cohort 1 began in April 2014. Selected candidates will participate in a six-month Bridge Program at the AUC.

As reported earlier, the STEP team finalized an outreach and recruitment plan for the STEM and MBA scholarships for women aimed at identifying qualified candidates throughout Egypt, through a transparent and fair selection process based on the following core criteria, approved by USAID for MBA applicants

MBA – Selection criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial need as defined by a related rubric.• Egyptian Citizenship – Dual citizens are not eligible.• Academic performance: undergraduate academic record with an average grade of Good. A pass grade is acceptable only if accompanied by a post-undergraduate diploma from a public university with a minimum grade of Good.• Thanawya Amma diploma from a public GOE school, experimental, Azhari schools, or schools under charitable organizations.• Applicants who were enrolled in a private secondary school or university are not eligible.• Experience in community and public service as evidenced by their response to a related question on the application• Commitment to change as assessed on an essay question in the application.• Demonstrated leadership qualities in the workplace.• Adequate English language skills as evidenced by a basic English test.

A. MBA Outreach Process:

Ministry of Higher Education

On April 3, 2014, STEP's COP met with Mr. Hisham Ahmed, Manager at the Central Department of Management (CDM) at the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) and introduced the MBA and STEM scholarship programs and asking for guidance and support. Mr. Hisham recommended meeting with the MOHE's First Undersecretary. As a follow up, a meeting was arranged by the COR with Dr. Mohamed Hamza, First Undersecretary at the MOHE, in the presence of Mr. Hisham Ahmed, CDM Manager. The meeting was attended by the COR and STEP's COP, DCOP, and Outreach & Recruitment Specialist. Dr. Hamza provided guidance and volunteered tips on organizations to target for the MBA scholarships. He conveyed his support and asked to be kept updated.

Throughout the outreach and selection process, STEP kept the MOHE updated on the developments through Mr. Hisham Ahmed. However, Dr. Hamza was moved to another position as of July 1, 2014.

Printed material:

After it obtained USAID's approval, STEP printed 4,000 brochures for distribution through its partners, Nahdat El Mahrousa (NM), Education for Employment (EFE), and their network organizations throughout the governorates as well as during information sessions. In addition, STEP distributed brochures to the MOHE, women business organizations, and NGOs. Banners and roll-ups were also printed and used during information sessions and other activities (*Please see Attachment 6 for rollups*).

Information Sessions

In partnership with NM and EFE, STEP conducted 15 information sessions across 13 governorates (*please see Attachment 7 for a list of the sessions held by location*). Due to the time constraints surrounding Cohort 1, there was a limit as to how many information sessions could be held in the time available. The information sessions were held through NM and EFE's partner NGOs in each region and were led by an NM or EFE staff member as well as a STEP representative. The sessions consisted of a presentation followed by a lengthy question and answer period to explain the MBA scholarship opportunity to potential candidates, encourage participation, and answer questions (*Please see Annex 5 for sample session pictures*).

Advertisement

In addition to the information sessions, the MBA scholarship opportunity was advertised in the Al Ahram newspaper on three different occasions (Saturday, June 14, Wednesday, June 18, and Friday, June 27, 2014). Furthermore, the following social media initiatives were taken:

- Announcements on partners' websites: NM and EFE.
- STEP Facebook page advertising the academic scholarships as well as providing up to date details on information sessions, selection process, as well as responses to candidate questions / inquiries. Total page "likes" to-date are 1,800.
- Postings on the NM and EFE Facebook pages as well as the EFE Alumni group and Facebook pages of partner organizations.
- EFE sent email shots to alumni reaching 15,500 email accounts.
- Announcement posted on the US Embassy Facebook page and Twitter account.
- STEP sent email shots to over 45 business associations and organizations.
- An information email was set up by STEP to respond to candidate inquiries and concerns.

B. MBA Recruitment & Selection Process:

The STEM recruitment and selection process consisted of the following phases:

- Phase 1: Development of the application and scoring rubric;
- Phase 2: Review and scoring of applications;
- Phase 3: Group activity camp and English testing;
- Phase 4: Individual Interviews;
- Phase 5: AUC Placement test;
- Phase 6: Identification of finalists

Phase 1 – Development of the application and scoring rubric:

Since the target audience for the MBA scholarships consists of adults and working women, STEP and its partners, Education For Employment (EFE) and Nahdet El Mahrousa (NM) agreed to offer an automated online application with the ability to upload supporting documents, therefore encouraging candidates to submit applications electronically rather than hard copies. In partnership with EFE, the STEP team held a focus group with 20 EFE female participants and graduates to discuss the online draft MBA application. Based on the feedback obtained, improvements were introduced to make the application more comprehensible and easier to complete. The final application version was launched online on June 1, 2014, after review and approval by USAID.

In collaboration with EFE, a rubric for the application evaluation was developed. A workshop to familiarize the evaluators on the rubric was held at EFE on July 16, 2014. The scoring rubric was embedded in the online automated application. Given the large number of applicants for the MBA

scholarships, the ability to evaluate and score the applications online greatly facilitated the process. Each application was reviewed and scored by two different evaluators.

The deadline for the MBA applications was set for July 15, 2014 (*Please refer to Attachment 8 for a copy of the MBA application*).

Phase 2 – Review and scoring of applications:

712 eligible applications were received out of 6,135 expressions of interest and 2,032 completed applications. After review and scoring, 586 applicants were processed to the next selection phase.

Phase 3 - Group activity camp and English testing:

586 applicants were invited to the group activity camp which was held at EFE's premises over a period of 3 days: August 22-23 and August 27. Logistical support was provided by NM and STEP. A total of 496 applicants showed up (89 no shows). The candidates were first administered a basic English test (EPE) and in groups of five, participated in an activity assessed by one observer. Candidates were given 20 minutes to read a scenario and collaborate to reach a decision then relay their findings to the assessor. Assessors were not permitted to discuss any aspect of the group activity with participants or answer any questions raised during the exercise. Candidates were scored on the following competencies: leadership, creativity, team work, results oriented, and communication (*Please see Annex 6 for pictures during the Group Assessment camp and EPE*).

Prior to the group activity camp, a workshop was held on August 18, at IIE, to familiarize the assessors with the evaluation criteria and scoring as well as with the objective of the group activity session.

As a result of the assessments, 164 candidates received a passing score in both the EPE (80 out of 120) and the group activity.

Phase 4 - Individual interviews:

164 candidates representing 20 governorates reached the next selection phase. With logistical support from NM and STEP, the individual interview camp was held at EFE's premises over a period of 3 days on September 5-7, 2014. A panel of three evaluators consisting of members of EFE, NM, and IIE interviewed the 156 candidates who attended the interview camp.

Prior to conducting the interviews, the STEP team provided an orientation session for panelists to review the evaluation rubric, highlight what behaviors to look for in each candidate and ensure that all panelists are clear on roles, responsibilities and objectives of the individual interviews.

Each interview session was scheduled for approximately 1:15 hours during which panelists first reviewed each candidate's file, conducted the interview, and completed their scoring of the candidate. The interview questionnaire focused on topics reflecting what was submitted in the application in addition to more in depth details related to career/study objectives, community service, financial status, leadership qualities and openness and adaptability towards different cultures. Panelists were asked to cover all questions on the rubric, individually score the candidates, then discuss as a group and reach a consensus score, should any significant variances in scoring arise.

At the conclusion of this selection phase, 130 candidates qualified to the next and final round.

Phase 5 - AUC Placement test:

130 candidates representing 20 governorates were invited to undergo an English placement test (SEPT) at AUC on September 22, 2014. The test identifies candidates who have the potential to benefit from the

six-month Bridge Program at AUC to pass the required pre-admission tests (TOEFL and GMAT) as well as succeed in their studies at U.S. universities.

STEP tested 126 candidates who showed up for the test, and 85 qualified to proceed to the selection of the finalists.

Phase 6 – Identification of Finalists:

As a result of a meeting with USAID, STEP recommended on October 1, 2014 a list of 63 MBA finalists allowing for 3 alternates. The list was approved and it represented candidates from 17 governorates. *(Please refer to Attachment 9 for a list of the approved MBA finalists).*

Similarly to the STEM scholarships program, official acceptance letters for the selected scholars were approved by USAID; each finalist will receive an original letter signed by the Mission Director *(Please see Attachment 10 for a sample acceptance letter).*

By September 30, 2014, all applicants were informed by EFE that, if they had not been invited to take the English Placement test at AUC, they are not among the finalists. In addition, EFE encouraged applicants to re-apply to the next cohort.

3. Short-term Technical Assistance (STTA)

On June 22, 2014, STEP received a request from the USAID Education Technical Office to provide short term technical assistance to the Early Grade Reading Unit at the Ministry of Education (MOE-EGR). The Terms of Reference (TORs) called for a 4-month assistance starting August 1, 2014, to support the nationwide roll out of early grade reading in grades 1-3 by the MOE.

For the following several days, STEP worked with the DO/Education office to refine the TORs and better define some of the tasks. Following these clarifications, a Performance Solution Request for Technical Assistance (PSR-TA) was developed and signed by USAID on July 14, 2014.

Because of the urgency in starting implementation, before the approval of the PSR-TA, on July 8, 2014, STEP issued an RFP which was sent to three organizations solicited by STEP and three individual consultants recommended by the DO team. Two proposals were received: one from Keys to Effective Learning (Keys) and another from one of the independent consultants, Dr. Wael Salah. A thorough review of both the technical and financial aspects of each proposal was conducted by three members of the STEP team. As a result, on July 13, STEP submitted a Recommendation Memo recommending the STTA be awarded to Keys. USAID's approval was received on July 15 accompanied with a request for a kick-off meeting between the MOE-EGR and the awardee.

The kick-off meeting was held with Hanaa Kasem, Head of the MOE EGR Unit, on August 7, 2014 at the MOE. It was attended by representatives from USAID, the MOE's Sector Chief of Public Education, the MOE EGR unit, Keys, and STEP. During the meeting, it was agreed that the Head of the MOE-EGR unit and Keys would meet on August 10 to develop a work plan. Based on the meeting, Keys drafted a work plan which was approved by the MOE-EGR on August 14, 2014. Feedback on the plan was obtained on August 19, from the DO team based on which the work plan was revised and resubmitted for approval. Approval from the DO team was received on August 24, 2014. As a result of the changes made to the original PSR-TA, a revised version was issued and approved by USAID on August 25, 2014.

As of September 30, 2014 the following had been accomplished under this STTA:

1. Criteria for evaluating training plans was created by the 27 Muderiya Coordinators representing all governorates during the capacity building workshop on August 27 and 28, 2014. The criteria were revised and edited by Ms. Hanaa Kasem, Head of EGR on September 18, 2014. This was followed, on September 21, by a revision session of the 27 Muderiya training plans using the developed criteria. The review sessions included members of the central MoE; Safaa Ezzat, Central MoE EGR office and Radwan Abdel Motlab, MoE EGR Coordinator. The review session was facilitated by Keys staff. Feedback was recorded on each of the training plans and emailed to all Muderiya Coordinators through the central MoE staff with a request to revise their plans based on the feedback sent. The outcomes of these tasks are as follows:
 - EGR Unit and 27 EGR governorate Coordinators able to create criteria for assessing training plans;
 - 27 governorate EGR Coordinators able to create effective, timely, realistic training plans;
 - EGR Unit able to review and assess training plans;
 - EGR Unit able to provide constructive feedback to governorate EGR teams regarding their training plans;
 - 27 governorate EGR Coordinators able to self-assess their training plans;
 - EGR Unit able to create a system for follow-up on the governorates in relation to training activities.
2. Similarly to the criteria initially created by the Muderiya Coordinators during the Aug. 27-28 workshop, criteria were adapted from the training rubric created by the Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT). This process was done to give the training evaluation tool creditability. Throughout the training follow up and monitoring visits in five governorates (Matrouh, South Sinai, Dakhliya, Qalubiyah, and Luxor), edits were made to the training evaluation rubric based on feedback from the governorate teams regarding the tools practicality. Final version of the rubric was revised by Hanaa Kasem, Head of EGR Unit. Following are the outcomes:
 - EGR Unit and 27 EGR governorate Coordinators able to create rubrics to evaluate EGR training;
 - 30 EGR members from different Muderyias and districts able to evaluate the training evaluation rubric;
 - EGR Unit able to evaluate training evaluation rubric.
3. The 27 Muderiya Coordinators representing all governorates created their Muderiya monitoring and evaluation plans during the capacity building workshop facilitated by Keys team on August 27 and 28, 2014. The monitoring and evaluation plans were revised by Safaa Ezzat, Central MoE EGR office and Radwan Abdel Mutlab, MoE EGR Coordinator. The review session was facilitated by Keys staff. Feedback was recorded for each of the monitoring and evaluation plan, and emailed to all Muderiya Coordinators through the central MoE staff with a request to revise their plans based on the feedback sent. Outcomes:
 - EGR Unit and 27 governorate Coordinators able to create criteria for assessing monitoring and evaluation plans;
 - 27 governorate EGR Coordinators able to create effective, timely, realistic monitoring and evaluation plans;
 - EGR Teams able to create monitoring and evaluation plans that align with their training activities;
 - EGR Unit able to provide constructive feedback to governorate EGR teams regarding their monitoring and evaluation plans.

4. Between September 1 – 17, Keys attended a Teacher Training program in each of the EGR designated five governorates (Dakahlia, South Sinai, Matrouh, Luxor, and Qalubya). The following steps were taken by all *Keys* staff while conducting the visits to ensure that they were building the capacity of the EGR Teams at the governorate and district levels:

- Conduct an initial meeting with the Muderiya EGR Team to:
 - Introduce the objective of these visits: “building their capacity to provide follow-up and evaluate EGR Grade 1-3 training”
 - Introduce the follow-up tool and the important elements that they cover
 - Build their skills to provide constructive feedback (brainstorming) e.g., start with positives and ask, if you could do this activity again what would you do differently or improve? How?
 - Establish appropriate ethics and behaviors when entering a training room to observe, e.g., not to interfere with training, not to make comments on the trainer’s work while the training is being delivered or allow the participants to see training feedback notes
 - Record EGR governorate team feedback on the tool
 - Give each member of the evaluation team a copy of the tool to study
 - Set schedule and timeline for the visits of at least five trainings and divide into two teams (each team was headed by a *Keys* Staff)
- Provide each of the MoE staff with a tool to fill out while observing the training.
- On the first day of the training visits in a governorate, provide feedback to MoE EGR Trainers.
- On the second day, EGR members provide constructive feedback with support from *Keys*.
- On the last day of the visit, debrief the process (use the effective follow-up sheet), record the feedback from the EGR Team on the follow up tool, and support them to create an action plan based on what they observed during to the training.
- Needed Documentation:
 - Observation sheets for at least three trainings each
 - Feedback from each governorate:
 - What went well
 - What can we improve if we had to do the activity again
 - How did you find the training you visited:
 - ✓ Trainers
 - ✓ Organization of the training
 - ✓ Training Materials (Manuals and resources)
 - Pictures or quotes
 - Sessions’ evaluation from each participant
 - Attendance Sheet
 - Financial Documentation

Outcomes from these visits:

- 30 EGR members from Muderyia and district levels able to conduct effective training monitoring and evaluation visits.
- 30 EGR members from Muderyia and district levels able to provide constructive feedback to EGR Trainers.
- 30 EGR members from Muderyia and district levels able to evaluate training based on an established criteria

Challenges, successes, strengths, and recommendations regarding the EGR training in governorates are presented in Attachment 11.

5. In coordination with the MOE-EGR, Keys developed a list of recommendations for improving the effectiveness of training materials for the training of trainers, teachers, and supervisors for Grades 1 to 3. Criteria for evaluating the training materials was created by MoE EGR Team and facilitated by Keys. Then focus groups were formed (Teachers-Supervisors-Trainers-MoE EGR Team) to provide feedback on the different EGR trainings materials. (*The list of recommendations is provided in Attachment 11*).

Outcomes from the development of the list of recommendations:

- EGR Team able to create the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of training materials.
- Select group of EGR Unit and District Coordinators able to review and assess training materials and provide realistic recommendations for their improvement.

Following are some of the testimonials from MOE representatives expressing their views on the assistance provided:

“As I was meeting with the coordinators this morning before the beginning of the session, they noted that all of them are in agreement that this is by far the best training they received. Keys takes first place out of all training companies that provided training for this team. This training is beneficial, well organized, and most of all, the coordinators feel appreciated and intellectually respected.” - Hanaa Kasem, Head of the MOE EGR unit.

“This is a very beneficial training. It added to my experience as a coordinator. The staff that provided the session were very respectful and were open to suggestions to changes in the follow up tool and answered all our questions.” - Lamia Ali, EGR District Coordinator, Dakahlia Governorate.

“The follow up sessions were extremely beneficial. I learned how to be organized in my work as a coordinator. We all gained new skills in doing effective follow up, using criteria to evaluate training implementation, and giving constructive feedback to our training staff. This has changed the way I look at evaluation. Now I realize that evaluation tool is used as a tool for improvement not as a sword.” - Maysa Ahmed, EGR District Coordinator, Dakahlia Governorate.

“This is a very effective rubric. It directs us on what we should look for when we visit training rooms.” - Thebet Mostafa-EGR Coordinator

(Please refer to Attachment 11 for additional testimonials)

4. Assessment Study

On August 28, 2014, a request was received from USAID/COR to conduct an assessment on Egypt's youth and adult literacy needs, ongoing Government of Egypt (GOE) assistance, donor and non-governmental organization (NGO) programs; and best practices and gaps. In addition, the study should assess the capacity building needs of the Community Education Department (CED) under the MOE and the Adult Education Authority (AEA) as well as the capacity of the Community Schools and their potential of hosting Adult Literacy programs.

When reviewing the Terms of Reference, STEP and its partner, Career Development and consultancy Academy (CDC), raised some concerns based on which an initial meeting was held

on September 20, 2014 at the MOE with Dr. Mohamed Saad, Sector Head of Public Education. The meeting was attended by the COR, STEP team members, and CDC representatives. Mr. Saad referred the team to Dr. Moheb El Refaee, Head of the Adult Education Authority (AEA).

A follow up meeting was held with Dr. El Refaee on September 28, 2014 at which time the terms of reference for the STTA were discussed in detail, and Dr. El Refaee, accompanied by Dr. Reda Hegazy, Deputy Head of the AEA gave numerous useful insights and recommendations to be taken into consideration as USAID defines its strategy for assistance to the AEA. It was agreed that a follow up meeting will be held once the scope of work for the assessment is finalized by the STEP team and approved by USAID.

Deliverables:

- Workplan: On August 31, 2014 and in accordance with the contract terms, STEP submitted a final version of the second fiscal year workplan.
- PMP: in accordance with the contract terms, on August 31, 2014 STEP submitted, a Performance Monitoring Plan (both chart and narrative) for FY2015. The PMP focused on the academic programs. A revised PMP will be submitted, once the training plans of the technical offices are developed.

Administrative:

- I. In the month of July 2014, IIE was pleased to relocate its premises to 45, road 206 in Degla, Maadi. The new space has accommodated the STEP team in addition to the USAID funded IIE LOTUS program staff.
- II. The following staff members have joined the STEP project since the last progress report submitted in March 2014:
 1. Hany Fathy, Finance Manager – April 8, 2014
 2. Abeer El Shafei, HR & Admin Manager - April 8, 2014
 3. Sherine Hegab, Program Manager, Scholarship Coordinator – April 8, 2014
 4. Mohammed Hussein, Jr. Administrative Manager – April 8, 2014
 5. Sayed El Tayeb, Office Assistant – April 8, 2014
 6. Dina Kafafi, Deputy Chief of Party – April 10, 2014
 7. Lamiaa Negm El Din, Outreach and Recruitment Specialist – April 27, 2014
 8. Wael Fathy, IT Officer – May 1, 2014
 9. Elizabeth Arsany, Program Manager, Professional Development & Technical Assistance - May 18, 2014
 10. Wafaa Bekhit, Training Officer – June 1, 2014
 11. Dahlia Hamdy, Training Officer – June 2014
 12. Abeer Serag, Training Assistant – June 1, 2014

13. Dina Tawfik, Training Assistant – June 1, 2014
14. Dalia Bahaa, Procurement & Administrative Officer – June 1, 2014
15. Germeen Rifky, Training Officer – July 1, 2014
16. Rania Rabie, Training Officer – July 1, 2014
17. Fawkia Rizk, Training Assistant – July 1, 2014

III. Change in personnel:

Training Officer, Rania Rabie, resigned effective date October 1, 2014.

III. Challenges Encountered, Actions Taken and/or Resolutions

1. Security Clearance for STEP project activities (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Social Solidarity) – On June 2, 2014 STEP submitted a request to the MOE, Mr. Mohamed Saad, Head of the General Education Sector, to allow the project team and our partner AFS to visit public schools for the purpose of conducting outreach and recruitment activities for the STEM undergraduate scholarships program. A follow up request was sent in early August 2014 for the same purpose. We were informed at the time, that in order to conduct any activities in schools, the MOE must obtain security clearance for IIE, specifically the STEP project. STEP management explained that as an NGO, IIE has already been granted security clearance by the MOSS to operate in Egypt, including any and all activities related to the STEP project. The MOE stated that if we could obtain either a copy of this clearance or the clearance number and have it sent to the MOE, this would probably facilitate the approval of STEP activities in schools.

STEP's action: pursuant to several requests from IIE, the MOSS finally agreed to cooperate and issued a letter in September 2014 to the MOE confirming that security clearance was obtained for IIE and its STEP project and providing them with the clearance reference number. We are currently following up on the MOE's response to this correspondence. Allowing the project and its partner AFS access to public schools would greatly contribute to the outreach and recruitment of potential candidates for the STEM scholarship.

2. Revised Branding Strategy for HEI – On July 10, 2014 STEP COP, DCOP and Outreach and Recruitment Specialist attended a meeting with the USAID Mission Director, Deputy Mission Director, Acting CO, STEP COR, Director of Education, Director of Communications, and Acquisition & Assistance Specialist to discuss the new Higher Education Initiative (HEI) branding requirements and the revised branding strategy released by USAID. As a result, STEP re-branded the STEM and MBA scholarships as the “USAID Higher Education Initiative (HEI) MBA / STEM Scholarship for Women” and has applied all revisions noted in the revised strategy to project activities, reflecting USAID requirements. The change in branding also led to the extension in the submission deadline for the STEM scholarships to July 31, 2014. The MBA scholarship deadline remained the same, July 15, 2014. In late September, STEP was advised by USAID to stop using the HEI branding until further notice and to avoid referencing STEP with the academic programs.

STEP's actions: until further notice, STEP will associate all printed materials and advertisement related to the academic programs only to USAID sub-brand.

3. Training plans: the Democracy & Governance and the Economic Growth technical offices are in the design phase and were awaiting execution of bilateral agreements with the GOE. As a result, USAID Technical Offices are not ready to discuss their training plans. By the end of this reporting period, no training plan has yet been developed.

STEP's response: the Bilateral Agreement was executed on September 28, 2014. As a result, STEP expects that the technical offices will be ready in Fall 2014 to discuss their training needs.

4. During its outreach and recruitment efforts for cohorts 1 of the undergraduate and MBA scholarships programs, STEP's local partners were frequently visited by GOE National Security officers who questioned the objectives and components of the programs. While these visits did not jeopardize the efforts, they made STEP's local partners very uncomfortable.

STEP's actions: At the request of STEP and to help ease the partners' concerns, USAID issued in Summer 2014 a letter clarifying the role of IIE and its local partners in the STEP project. In addition, IIE believes that, once the MOE provides clearance for STEP to conduct activities at public schools, the security issue will ease.

5. Due to time constraints in its outreach efforts for Cohorts 1 of both scholarships programs, STEP was able to hold 16 information sessions across 12 governorates for the STEM undergraduate scholarships and 15 information sessions across 13 governorates for the MBA scholarships. STEP would have liked to hold more sessions and cover at least a large majority of the governorates.

STEP's action: the recruitment efforts for Cohorts 2 will start in January-February 2015. In coordination with its partners, STEP will be able to hold more information sessions and cover no less than 20 governorates including all the underserved governorates.

IV. Success stories

During the implementation of the technical assistance to the MOE-EGR, the following success stories are reported:

1. The Head of the MOE-EGR unit wrote the following feedback: *"As I was meeting with the Coordinators this morning before beginning the second session, all of them are in agreement that this is by far the best training they received. Keys takes first place out of all training companies that provided training for this team. This training is beneficial, well organized, and most of all, the Coordinators feel appreciated and intellectually respected."*
2. The Head of the MOE-EGR has two assistants, neither of them is technically knowledgeable. With the approval of their supervisor, both were dispatched for few days to the subcontractor premises in order to build their capacity in evaluating training plans. At the end of one week, the assistants became well familiar with the tool to evaluate training plans, evaluated training plans, and provided valuable feedback on each.
3. Additional success stories from the EGR technical assistance were reported through feedback received on to-date implemented tasks. Following are excerpts:

"What I liked most about the session that it was very well organized. We were treated with respect. The Facilitators were outstanding in communicating the topics clearly and knew how to manage the sessions."

Sanaa Hussien: Giza Muderiyia Coordinator

“I have taken a workshop that included planning. But this session was more effective because it helped me tie the different parts together by focusing on identifying gaps and challenges and prioritizing them.”

Sabeh Semary- Alexandria Muderiyia Coordinator

“I benefited greatly from the session. I can summarize the benefits as following; (1) knowing how to plan effectively, (2) relating the training plan to the follow up plan, (3) gained skills in creating criteria, and most of all exchange of ideas with colleagues during the sessions.”

Ayman Mohamed – Luxor Muderiyia Coordinator

“This is the first time we have sent written feedback to our governorate teams. Now the EGR governorate team will be able to present us with quality work because they now know we will be reading it word by word”

Safaa Ezzat- Central MoE EGR office

“The follow-up session was extremely beneficial. I learned how to organize my work as a Coordinator. We gained new skills in doing effective follow-up, using criteria to evaluate training implementation, and giving constructive feedback to my staff.”

Maysa Ahmed: EGR Coordinator- District Coordinator Dakahlia Governorate

V. Documentation of best practices that can be taken to scale

1. The STEP project works with several partners in different areas of project implementation. For outreach and recruitment activities specifically the MBA scholarships program, STEP works closely with EFE, a local NGO affiliated with EFE USA. EFE’s original scope was limited to providing career development training for scholars participating in the program; however, in April 2014 a meeting was held with EFE management and the decision was made to solicit EFE’s support in several outreach and recruitment activities related to the MBA scholarship.

Assistance provided by EFE includes:

- Design and management of the on-line application process
- Online scoring of applications as per the rubric defined by STEP
- Conducting an English test for candidates to determine basic English language skills
- Design of the MBA group activity assessment and evaluation rubric in collaboration with the EFE Certified Lead Assessor, who provided a TOT to assessors from STEP and NM on August 20, 2014
- Phone calls and emails to candidates related to participation in different phases of the recruitment process
- Hosting of both the group activity and individual interview camps

Activities involving EFE began in May 2014 to meet the rapidly approaching deadlines for MBA Cohort 1. Unfortunately, during the implementation period, EFE had an unexpected drop in staff numbers, the impact of which became clear as soon as the work load increased with respect to the volume of candidates applying to the MBA scholarship, as noted earlier in this report. The STEP team was alert to this concern and in order to avoid a negative impact on the outreach and recruitment process, became closely involved in the ongoing logistics, in support of EFE.

IIE's organizational culture promotes supporting the growth and development of partner NGOs and building their capacity to improve processes. Taking this approach with EFE, STEP management made the decision to involve a greater number of the STEP team in supporting the outreach and recruitment activities for cohort 1 of the MBA scholarship. The objectives were as follows:

- To guarantee as much as possible the efficiency and accuracy of the MBA cohort 1 recruitment process
- Work with EFE management and staff to enhance organizational capacity in the areas of: communication, quality of deliverables, administrative and documentation processes.

In order to achieve the objectives above, the STEP team began by taking the following measures:

- Close follow up with the EFE team and alerting them of upcoming deadlines
- Mentoring EFE team members by joining them and volunteering to work as a team for milestone activities
- Drafting detailed meeting agendas and doing the same for all written communication to help EFE in documentation and follow up.
- Mentoring the newly appointed operations staff at EFE on how to set up different administrative processes essential for handling a large volume of candidates.
- Setting up a step-by-step process for managing registration, documentation, and establishing linkages between online applications and hard copies of essential supporting documents.
- Conducting weekly follow up meetings during critical periods in implementation– August/September.
- Mentoring by example, through demonstrating IIE's attention to accuracy, efficiency and quality assurance.

A planning and lessons learned meeting was held with the EFE CEO on September 17, 2014 after the completion of recruitment activities for cohort 1. The objective of the meeting was to discuss all lessons learned as noted by both teams, agree on areas of improvement; and discuss next steps prior to launching Cohort 2 activities. The meeting was very productive and revealed that EFE has in fact benefited from the capacity building and mentoring approach followed by the STEP team and demonstrated a good understanding of the outreach and recruitment activities, rationale, and processes. Overall, it was a mutually beneficial learning experience for both EFE and STEP team members, the result of which will be a much improved process for cohort 2.

2. During the recruitment process of cohorts 1, the applications did not request applicants to enter their national identification number. As a result, it was time consuming to recognize duplicated applications because candidates used different ways of entering their names as well as different email addresses and mobile numbers. In addition, candidates could have similar names. Since the MBA applications were fully automated, sorting applicants by name, mobile number, or email address did not filter out duplicated applications. As a result, there were over 3,000 duplicated entries, some of which were repeated over six times.

To avoid this problem while recruiting for the future cohorts, the applications will require the national identification number of the candidate and will be sorted by this number to avoid any duplication.

ATTACHMENTS LIST:

- Attachment 1: Revised branding on the STEM scholarship application and rollups.
- Attachment 2: List of STEM info sessions held by location.
- Attachment 3: Agenda of the STEM group activities camp.
- Attachment 4: List of STEM approved finalists.
- Attachment 5: Sample Acceptance letter for STEM finalists.
- Attachment 6: MBA scholarship rollups.
- Attachment 7: List of MBA info sessions held by location.
- Attachment 8: MBA scholarship application.
- Attachment 9: List of MBA approved finalists.
- Attachment 10: Sample Acceptance letter for MBA finalists.
- Attachment 11: Challenges, successes, strengths, recommendations, and testimonials regarding the EGR training.

ANNEXES LIST:

- Annex 1: STEM sample info session pictures (titled by location).
- Annex 2: STEM sample workshops session pictures (titled by type).
- Annex 3: STEM sample interview pictures.
- Annex 4: STEM sample activities camp pictures.
- Annex 5: MBA sample info session pictures (titled by location).
- Annex 6: MBA sample group assessment and EPE pictures.